

WATER SAFETY AND DROWNING PREVENTION

Pool Safety

Too often, firefighters hear people say, “It was just a few seconds.” Unfortunately, just a few seconds is all it takes for a child to drown.

Most of these children drown in their own backyard swimming pool, but others drown in buckets, bathtubs, toilets, dog water bowls, beaches and ponds. Small children are top-heavy, and they don't have the upper body strength to lift themselves out of one of these dangerous situations. Even if the child survives the incident, they are often left with permanent brain damage.

Drowning and near drowning can be prevented, and you can help! Anyone involved with the supervision of children needs to be aware of the dangers associated with any body of water. Below are some useful tips to prevent these needless tragedies.

- Know where your children are at all times
- Use an approved barrier to separate the pool from the house
- Never allow children to be alone near a pool or any water source
- Have life-saving devices near the pool, such as a pole/hook, or flotation device
- Keep large objects such as tables, chairs, toys, and ladders away from pool fences
- Post the 9-1-1 number on the phone
- Do not allow children to play around the pool and store all toys outside the pool area
- If you leave the pool area, take the children with you
- Always have a “designated child watcher”
- Learn to swim
- Never swim alone, or while under the influence of alcohol or medications
- Never swim when thunder or lightning is present
- Never dive into unfamiliar or shallow bodies of water

Bathtub Safety

Nationally, about 80 children die from bathtub drownings. Here are some tips for keeping your child safe in the tub:

- **Supervision.** NEVER leave a child unattended in the bathtub for ANY REASON. There is nothing important enough to risk drowning! Children can drown in just a few inches of water, and can easily topple into the tub while you're dashing out to answer the phone, get a towel, etc.

- * Don't run to answer the phone.

- * Don't check to see who's at the door.

- * Don't leave your child to be watched by an older brother or sister.

MAKE NO EXCEPTIONS TO THESE RULES!

- **Bath seats.** Several types of bath seats and rings adhere to the bottom of the tub with suction cups and offer bathing infants and toddlers support while sitting. Don't think that you can leave your child unattended. The suction cups can come loose, and it isn't hard for a child to slide out of the seats.
- **Get supplies first.** Collect soap, towel, diaper, clothing, toys, and any other items you plan on using before you even run the bath water. Place these items where you can reach them easily.
- **Water heater.** To reduce the risk of scalding, set your home's water heater to a maximum of 120 degrees Fahrenheit. A good test: You should be able to hold your hand comfortably under the tap even when the hot water alone is running.
- **Faucet covers.** Placing a soft, insulated cover over the bathtub faucet is a prudent safeguard against accidental burns or bumps. They are available at many baby-supplies stores.
- **Slips and Falls.** Prevent bathtub slips and falls by placing a rubber mat in the tub or affixing non-slip adhesive decals or strips to the bottom of the tub.
- **Electrical hazards.** Keep electrical devices (including hair dryers, curling irons, and electric razors) well away from the tub.

- **Slippery floors.** Be sure to use (and teach your child to use) extra caution and keep a non-slip bathroom rug by the side of the tub for your child to step onto after bathing.

Bucket Safety

Buckets filled with water or other liquids, especially the large five-gallon size, present a drowning hazard to small children.

Nationally, about 25 children drown every year in buckets, and many more are hospitalized. Many of the containers involved in drownings nationally were 5-gallon buckets containing liquids. Most were used for mopping floors or other household chores. Many were less than half full.

A young child's curiosity, along with their crawling and pulling up while learning to walk can lead to danger when buckets are used around the house. Curious children lean forward to play in the water. When they topple into the bucket, they are unable to free themselves and drown.

The 5-gallon bucket is particularly dangerous because its heavier weight makes it more stable than a smaller bucket, and unlikely to tip over when a child uses it to pull up. These containers are about half the height of the infants, and with several gallons of water, weigh more than children of that age.

- Never leave any bucket of water or other liquid unattended when small children are around.
- Even a partly filled bucket can be a drowning hazard.
- When doing household chores, immediately empty out buckets when finished, or move them to a safe place before taking a break.
- ALWAYS watch your children around water, inside the home, around the pool and around the yard.